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Knowledge of literary scholarship and the indexing of imaginative literature

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1. INTRODUCTION

The paper discusses the construction of subject headings as access points to the domain of imaginative literature, especially in relation to the aboutness of textual documents. Knowledge of the domain of linguistics and literary scholarship is used to clarify concepts, especially theories by Roman Jakobson and by post-structuralism.

The issue of the paper will be of relevance to subject indexing or other kinds of knowledge organization of imaginative literature in general. However, the realization of systems of KO implies some knowledge of the users of the system. Most common readers have information needs different from the needs of professional readers. When the paper refers to aspects of user needs, it primarily attends to professional readers, i.e. scholars and students of literature.

A main point is that imaginative literature has a more complex relationship between the denotative and the connotative level of textual content compared to non-fiction. However, it is possible to differ analytically between the two levels, and examples as well as the existence of dictionaries of literary themes and motifs point to the fact that it is possible to construct subject headings on a connotative, thematic level.

On the other hand a consensus of identical thematic subject headings is not easily obtained. Referring to a case study by Susan M Hayes (Hayes, 2001) the paper discusses literary criticism as a possible literary warrant of subject headings. It is suggested that Hayes's findings of disagreement as to identification of a connotative level of imaginative literature may be explained from a general discourse of literary criticism. Here difference of interpretation is valued higher than consensus. Theories of post-structuralism, deconstruction, and reader-response criticism have given particular attention to this. Texts – and especially texts of imaginative literature – are characterized by a plurality of meanings and interpretations. From that point of view indexing and subject headings may be not only difficult to construct but even obsolete.

Finally the existence of several – and very different – kinds of approaches to scholarly interpretation of literature indicates the existence of different kinds of subject headings and indexing needs.

The conclusion is not unambiguous. From one point of view the meaning of a text is defined as interplay of differences of meanings. From another point of view a consensus of at least some literary themes and motifs may be established, mirrored in literary dictionaries. Finally subject headings on a denotative level are easier to construct and correspond to information needs of literary scholars interpreting literature in a cultural context. Simultaneously existing but very different theories and approaches of literary scholarship may have different information needs and different points of view as to the possibility of literary subject headings. The paper concludes that further studies of the dominant paradigms of literary scholarship are needed, as well as studies of the information needs of literary scholars.

2. FICTION AND NON-FICTION

During the years imaginative literature has been the “Problem Child” of classification and indexing, as R.C. Walker stated as early as in 1958 (Walker, 1958). The problem is of a multiple kind but relates to the basic question: what constitutes a document of imaginative literature? Imaginative literature is normally understood as fiction, including main genres of literature: novels, short stories, poetry and drama. The main genres are normally subdivided in more or less well defined subgenres, e.g. historical novels, crime novels, sonnets, odes, tragedies and comedies, to mention a few. A lot of modern literary works are not easily placed in neat categories, however. The modernist tradition has lead to a merging of genres and experiments of literary forms.

Finally works of non-fiction may have narrative and stylistic features similar to fiction, e.g. essays and biographies. A recent trend in humanistic studies goes a step further and maintains that all kinds of non-fiction actually are fictitious. To Hayden White (White, 1987) all historians produce narratives. History is not a matter-of-fact organizing of objective facts or incidents, but a narrativizing of events. Historical texts are examples of a ‘literary’, narrative realism. History is telling stories, using literary forms, plots and tropes.

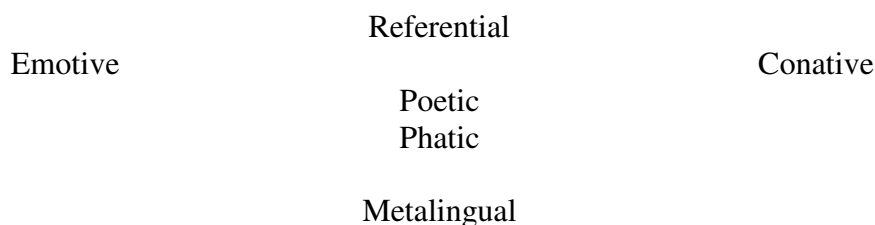
White’s point of view has some points of resemblance to the discourse theories of post-structuralism and social constructionism. To these social practices - including speaking and writing – are embedded in a network of social discourses, of which some are more hegemonic than others. Theories of discourse are anti-essentialist

theories. Utterances of ‘facts’ or ‘truth’ will necessarily be determined by the discourse in use.

Such theories point at a complex relationship between fiction and non-fiction. The complexity is increased by the existence of the tradition of literary realism and by some common reading habits. Many novels in the realist tradition obviously include events, persons or places from the outer, social or historical reality. Novels take place in London, New York, China etc. They are about the Civil War in Spain in the thirties or about the crusades of Medieval Times. Many readers read such novels in a ‘factitious’ way, i.e. as accounts of real events.

If non-fiction may be seen as ‘fictitious’ narratives, and fiction is read as accounts of real events, what, then, are the specific characteristics of the domain of fiction or imaginative literature? One answer may be the organization of literary genres, types, and forms. History may be written as narratives, but not as novels, biographies may have strong novelistic features, but will have other discursive features separating them from novels. Another answer is more abstract, using Roman Jakobson’s theory of the functions of language.

Imaginative literature attends to the “poetic function” of language. (Jakobson, 1987a, pp. 66-71). Jakobson has created a scheme of “the six basic functions of verbal communication” (Jakobson, 1987a, p. 71):



The six functions correspond to six “factors involved in verbal communication” (Jakobson, 1987a, p. 66). The emotive – or expressive – function tends to produce an impression of the *addresser’s* emotions and attitude. The referential function is oriented towards the *context*. Jakobson also calls the referential function the denotative or cognitive function. The object of the phatic function is to attract attention or to confirm a continued communication (“Are you listening?”). It corresponds to the factor of *contact*. The metalingual function is used whenever the addresser or the addressee need to be sure if they are using the same code (corresponding to the factor of *code*)(“Do you know what I mean?”). The conative function is oriented toward the addressee. It is a vocative or imperative function (“Admit that!”), corresponding to the factor of the *addressee*.

While the referential function is oriented toward the context, the poetic function is oriented toward the message. It has “focus on the message for its own sake” (Jakobson, 1987a, p.69). All six functions may exist in an example of verbal communication, but most often one or a few functions will be dominant and determining functions. As to imaginative literature – or “verbal art” – Jakobson writes:

“The poetic function is not the sole function of verbal art but only its dominant, determining function, whereas in all other verbal activities it acts as a subsidiary, accessory constituent” (Jakobson 1987a, p. 69)

When the poetic function is prominent, we will experience a focus on linguistic and textual aspects. Textual elements will be selected and combined to create a symbolic order in any text, but a prominent poetic function will appear as a detailed construction of the symbolic order itself. In poetry it may be expressed through creation of a certain rhythm, rhymes, alliterations, metaphors, selections of words with symbolic connotations etc. In the genres of literary prose it may be expressed through the combinations of larger textual units in order to create a certain mood, suspense, symbolic oppositions etc. The poetic function may be prominent in non-fiction too (e.g. in essays), but as a rule the poetic function will be dominant in imaginative literature.

The selection and combination of all textual elements to a unit of symbolic order apply to works of verbal art in the context of Jakobson’s writings. But the poetic function should not be conceived as an indication of quality. The poetic function is dominant in all fiction, in high verbal art as well as in popular novels of romance and thrillers. Here the poetic function may appear in more simple constructions of textual elements: good guys against bad guys, the good wife against the evil mistress. The poetic function of the worlds of fiction has as its purpose a creation of meaning in non-referential ways. It creates the mood, the suspense, or the thrill of literary experience.

The poetic function must not be conceived as an external feature of imaginative literature. It is not a linguistic ‘dress’ of the content but principal to the literary text and the reading. Theories of literary scholarship among other things are theories of the poetic function of literature, e.g. theories of literary style, genre, metaphors, narration, or rhetoric figures. These theories examine the *how*-facet of texts and documents, and the how-facet should be considered in the representations of cataloguing, classification and indexing (Nielsen, 1997). The poetic function and the how-facet are crucial to determine what *kinds of literary experience* we may expect from a work of imaginative literature.

Another important facet is the *what*-facet, or the *aboutness* of imaginative literature. How do we represent what a work of literature is actually about? In answering this question we focus on the “referential function” of language (Jakobson, 1987a, p. 66-71), i.e. the context of meaning. The referential function of fiction is often seen as analogous to the referential function of non-fiction, but the issue is subtler, because the poetic function as a rule is dominant of imaginative literature. From one point of view it seems obvious that the context of a novel exists outside the novel, whether it is a social environment, nature, a historical past or other contexts that we also refer to in non-fictional discourses or documents. On the other hand it is obvious that a novel about the battle of Stalingrad in World War 2 (e.g. *Days and Nights* (1944) by Konstantin Simonov) has a contextual reference of a quite different kind than a history book on the same issue. The novel of the battle of Stalingrad may be a documentary novel, but as a novel it constructs a symbolic order in which both documentary ‘facts’ and invented characters and events are merged as equal parts. The poetic function determines that we experience the novel not only as a historical account but also as a symbolic articulation of a more general kind.

In the novel as symbolic order the referential function is not simply additional to the poetic function. Roman Jakobson: “Because a poetic work also has a referential function, it is sometimes considered (...) as a straightforward document of cultural history, social relations, or biography” (Jakobson, 1987b, p. 43). But it is not such a document. The poetic – or aesthetic – function is dominant, Jacobson maintains: “...a poetic work is defined as a verbal message whose aesthetic function is its dominant” (ibid.).

This complicates the issue of aboutness, and we may extend the issue to the domain of aesthetic documents as a whole (as indicated by the citation above). The poetic function may be seen as an ‘aesthetic function’ including documents and artefacts of visual and electronic arts. This important aspect will not be developed further in this paper. Instead the paper will develop the issue of aboutness of fictional literature.

3. SUBJECT ACCESS TO FICTION: DENOTATIVE AND CONNOTATIVE LEVELS

Referring to Jakobson it has been stated above that the referential function of fiction is complicated by the existence of the dominant poetic function. The problem is repeated when defining the denotative and connotative levels of fiction and non-fiction.

Determining the referential function and the context of literary documents is important to provide subject access. On the other hand,

as stated by Jakobson above, it would be wrong to consider a poetic work “as a straightforward document of cultural history, social relations, or biography”. In other words, it would be wrong to determine the subject of a fictional work on a purely denotative level. How do we determine, then, what a work of fiction is about? To answer that question it is obvious to examine the discourses of literary criticism. How do they determine what fictional literature is about? And do they express a consensus? The discourses of literary criticism as a literary warrant might be useful to questions of subject access to fiction in general, but especially in relation to professional end users who primarily are considered in this paper.

Recently Susan M. Hayes (Hayes, 2001) has made an impressive study of the use of popular and literary criticism in providing subject access to imaginative literature. In her study she has chosen Butler Library at Columbia University Libraries for a study sample. To each sampled work she has assembled all the relevant literature about the work, limiting the literature review to the holdings of Butler Library. Relevant, critical literature is defined broadly: literary criticism (scholarly articles and monographs) as well as popular criticism (reviews in daily and monthly periodicals). The two sets of critical materials were further compared to Hayes’ own, individual subject analysis of each fictional work. Following a subject analysis, she determined the topics of each fictional work from a review of the critical material and transformed them into access points using the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* (LCSH) and *Older’s Fiction Subject Headings: A Supplement and Guide to the LC Thesaurus*. The aim of the study was to determine whether there was general agreement or disagreement as to topical content. If the criticism is of any use for the subject cataloguer, the possibility of creating subject headings from the critical material is a claim. Further it is a claim that there is consensus among critics, i.e. it should be possible to create the *same* subject headings as access points. In her report of the results Hayes differs between complete critical consensus, partial consensus and no consensus.

Before I refer to the results of Hayes’ study, I will explain the theoretical context of Hayes’ study. She refers to that context herself, and it relates to the issue mentioned above. To Hayes subject headings and conceptual access points to fiction refers *both* to the denotative elements of fiction *and* to the connotative elements. These concepts have traditionally been used in relation to linguistic meaning in general, but may be especially useful in relation to imaginative literature. The denotative elements refer to what a literary work are literally about, usually the fictional time and place, fictional setting and events and fictional characters. These are entities explicit in the text, and in most cases it seems an easy task to define the entities and construct subject headings and descriptors from them. To Clare

Beghtol it seems the *only* entities possible to define objectively (Beghtol, 1995). They are what a given work of fiction is *about*, corresponding to the factual content of non-fictional documents. But determining what a work of literature is about, is not only a matter of describing the explicit content represented by explicit words on a denotative level. The discourses of literary criticism, reviews or even conversations among readers reveal that fictional works also are about love, hate, loneliness, social injustice etc. And very often a work of fiction is structured as thematic juxtapositions as duty versus passion, nature versus civilization, tragic fate versus individual struggle etc. Such words or phrases are abstract expressions of meaning that summarize literary themes of the work. They express the connotative level of the fictional works, and Hayes is right when she considers thematic concepts as just as objective as subject headings expressing, events, spaces or times. Meaning is inter-subjective, and exists only as a complex interplay between signifiers and the signified in a communicational space. Before meaning comes into existence, an active process of interpretation must take place. Even the linguistic representations of meaning on the denotative level are not simple ‘containers’ of a given content. Meaning both on the denotative and on the connotative level implies a linguistic construction of meaning. On the connotative level it implies linguistic abstractions.

Non-fictional literature operates linguistically on both a denotative and a connotative level just like fictional literature, but as to fictional, imaginative literature it is more difficult to isolate the aboutness on a denotative level only. In an article from 1992 Hayes wrote about the reason of this: literary works “can exist on several different levels at once: the literal, the symbolic, and the thematic” (Hayes, 1992, p. 445). You may add that the literal, denotative level of a work of fiction always in advance is embedded in a symbolic or thematic level. This corresponds to the fact that the referential function of the novel is embedded in a symbolic order where the aesthetic function is the dominant. (cf. the citation by Jakobson above).

When the Danish author Johan Skjoldborg writes about an agricultural small-holder in his novel *En Stridsmand* (“A Fighter”) from 1896, he is not contributing to the sociological literature about small-holders as a population-segment at the end of 19th century. The cultivation of the moors of Jutland is through the novel experienced as a more general struggle between man and nature. The descriptions of hard work with pickaxe and plough have social, moral and psychological aspects on a thematic level. The meaning on the denotative level does not only refer to entities outside the text but also to a construction of meaning in the symbolic order of the text.

4. THE NEED OF SUBJECT HEADINGS ON A DENOTATIVE LEVEL

Even novels in the tradition of social realism intertwine fictional facts with symbolic meaning. On the other hand it is relatively easy to identify items on a denotative level in works of realism and mainstream literature, and it also makes sense. John Steinbeck's novel *Grapes of Wrath* from 1939 is about poor tenants (characters) in Oklahoma (place) who are forced to travel as migrants (event) to California (place) under the Great Depression (time). From this description you may create subject headings as access points on a denotative level.

As a matter of fact this is what happens in the construction of subject headings in Library of Congress Online Catalog. Here *Grapes of Wrath* has the subject headings:

Migrant agricultural laborers—Fiction
Rural families—Fiction
Labor camps—Fiction
Depressions—Fiction
California—Fiction

This is a comprehensive indexing on a denotative level, following *Guidelines on Subject Access to Individual Works of Fiction, Drama, Etc.*, prepared by Subject Analysis Committee (1990). A second one in 2000 followed the first edition of the Guidelines, and the Guidelines embody an increased effort of creating subject access to fiction, also mirrored in LCSH.

Christopher Miller (Miller, 2003) explains this renewed effort from the increased interest of multiculturalism and from the postmodernist devaluation of the literary canon. To Miller development of literary scholarship has created the need for retrieving of cultural, social and historical aspects of the content of fictional works. When the literary canon was in focus, the names of the authors and the titles of their works were adequate for retrieval of fiction, but the last decades have witnessed a growing multiculturalism and the raising of an ethnic, racial, and cultural self-consciousness, shaping the background of a scholarly interest of these aspects of fictional content.

The extension of LC subject headings on a denotative level helps to identify literary items with similar content. The subject headings indicate what fictional novels are *about*. With a systematic use of this kind of subject headings we may identify a corpus of literary works similar to *Grapes of Wrath*, in the sense that they are about all or about a few of the following aspects of fictional content: migrant agricultural labourers, rural families, labour camps, depressions (in an economical sense) or California. And as Miller argues there may be a user need for such identifications among literary scholars. Miller does

not mention user needs of common readers. It has been stated, though, that especially common readers have a need for seeking fiction about items of this denotative level. Among others it was the findings of the Danish researcher Annelise Mark Pejtersen in the 1970's (Pejtersen et al., 1996) and of the creators of the small Swedish system EDVIN, a search system for fiction based on the experience of users' needs (Ekvall and Larsson, 1997).

5. SUBJECT HEADINGS ON A CONNOTATIVE, THEMATIC LEVEL

But in the construction of subject headings solely from a denotative level we forgot what Jakobson told us: that in a poetic work the poetic, aesthetic function is dominant. The novel is not only about social events on specific geographical places at specific historical times or about specific social or cultural groups (though these characteristics are important). We identify with the characters because they express *themes* of a more common kind: themes of being homeless, loss and longing for a place to call their own. We also identify with the characters because they are embedded in a thrilling narrative. The poetic function exposes itself in echoes of other great epics of travelling or migration: The *Odyssey* and the Bible's story of the Israelites' escape from Egypt and their migration towards the Promised Land. The latter also called the *Exodus*. These mythical and religious aspects of the novel exist on a connotative level, and they imply acts of interpretation. Most guidelines of classification and indexing express scepticism of interpretation in the construction of subject headings or descriptors, because it seems difficult to find a literary warrant in the documents.

Themes such as the "Promised Land" or the "Exodus" imply an interpretation of the novel. But do they lack a linguistic warrant in the fictional text? Certainly not. Connotations are aspects of the linguistic meaning of the text just as the denotative level is. We may analytically distinguish between the denotative level and the connotative level, but as already mentioned these levels of literate and symbolic levels of meaning intertwine. This is a fact concerning all meaning, but it is especially important in relation to imaginative literature and is due to the dominant poetic function.

Imaginative literature often loads and saturates the text with connotations and several levels of meaning. Indeed, as stated by Roland Barthes (Barthes, 1993), the denotative level of fiction in the tradition of realism may be an illusion. The realism wants to give us the impression that the language of the text is a transparent window to reality. We are supposed to experience the denotative level of representation as if we were there. The 'trick' of illusionism is that characters, events, settings and places are experienced as the

fundamental or ‘first’ meaning of the text. But, as Barthes writes: “denotation is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so; under this illusion, it is ultimately no more than the last of the connotations” (Barthes, 1993, p. 9).

With the expression “the last of the connotations” Barthes suggests that texts – and especially literary texts – have several meanings on a connotative level. This view of a ‘polysemous’ nature of imaginative literature was extended in the post-structuralist tradition after Barthes, and it is obvious that it brings difficulties to the indexing of imaginative literature. However, even if a subject analysis from the denotative level may seem naïve from the point of view of the post-structuralists, it does not mean that this kind of indexing always is obsolete (cf. Miller, 2003). On the other hand we should not pretend that it is the neutral, objective way of doing things. Underneath lies a specific paradigm of literary criticism: that imaginative literature primarily serves as sources of information of social or cultural groups, their cultural habits and ideas. Miller’s paradigm of multiculturalism corresponds to the tradition of cultural studies and the tradition of social history of literature in Europe in the seventies and eighties. In these cases other aspects of literary criticism were subdued, e.g. aesthetic, stylistic studies, comparative literature or semiotic textual analysis.

The title of Miller’s essay indicates that the library cataloguing community has acknowledged the change of literary scholarship too slowly. The change took place in the 70’s and 80’s:

“Naturally, major policy initiatives should not be tied fast to any and all theoretical adjustments of predominating academic models and approaches to the study of literature and history, but 20 years of major and visible literary evolution is probably more than should have been ignored” (Miller, 2003, p. 97)

To Miller the library cataloguing community should be more sensitive to the needs of its users, here the literary scholars. New ways of indexing in Library of Congress finally mirror needs of literary scholars but the initiative was developed at a late stage of the development.

Miller has a good point, and the indexing of aboutness on a denotative level will correspond with information needs of *some* literary scholars. But to day literary scholarship is characterized by a pluralism of theories and methods. To day it is difficult to observe a homogeneous trend in literary scholarship. If there is a consensus, it is a consensus of pluralism, the legitimating of a multiple corpus of theories.

Some of these theories have roots in the long tradition of literary hermeneutics. For instance the tradition of comparative literature discovers common literary themes and motifs in literatures of several countries and centuries. This may indicate an information need of subject headings on a thematic level, which is much more difficult than the creating of subject headings on a denotative level. The identification of connotations or themes seems to be the result of constructions of meaning during the reading. But indexing is rarely a result of *reading* literary works. And even if it was, how might we prevent that themes and connotations are not only private associations of an individual reader? (Like my determination of the connotative level of *Grapes of Wrath*). However, if we are able to identify an agreement of this thematic or symbolic aspect of Steinbeck's novel, there will be arguments for constructing thematic subject headings as access points, e.g. as a word string: "travel to the Promised Land" or as the phrases "Promised Land" and "Exodus". The use of "Exodus" as a thematic subject heading will, of course, imply a use of the subject heading in the indexing of other literary works with this theme. In other words, the use will imply the construction of a controlled set of thematic subject headings, or perhaps a thesaurus construction. The backbone of such a corpus of thematic subject headings might be literary dictionaries, such as Jean-Charles Seigneuret (1988): *Dictionary of literary themes and motifs* or Elizabeth Frenzel (1992): *Motive der Weltliteratur: ein Lexikon dichtungsgeschichtlicher Längsschnitte*. The purpose of the use of subject headings of literary themes and motifs would be construction of access points for information retrieval. The study of literary themes and motifs is an important aspect of literary scholarship, and thematic subject headings therefore will correspond to an information need of literary scholars or even of common readers who want to identify literary works with identical or similar themes or motifs.

In relation to Steinbeck's novel there may exist a literary warrant for the use of "Exodus" and "Promised Land". Keith Windschuttle writes of "This American version of Exodus faced its own Sinai crossing in the Arizona desert" (Windschuttle, 2002). The book blurb of the Penguin edition of 1976 characterizes the novel this way: "The epic story of the Joad family's migration from the Oklahoma dust bowl to the Promised Land of California." (Book Blurb, 1976). And the relationship between themes of migration and the theme of Exodus may be identified in other novels. E.g. it is identified as a common theme in the literary movement called The Black Chicago Renaissance from about 1930 to 1950. The background of the movement was "The Great Migration" of Afro-Americans from the South to Chicago, caused by racism and unemployment after the introduction of the mechanical cotton picker. James Hurt states:

“The Great Migration was often represented in biblical terms by those who experienced it, as the title of Nicholas Lemann's excellent history of the migration, *The Promised Land* (1992), suggests. The move to Chicago was a journey out of bondage into freedom, like the journey of the Israelites out of Egypt” (Hurt, 2000).

Construction of “Exodus” (literary motif or theme) as an access point enables in this case the retrieving of a common theme between *Grapes of Wrath* and novels of The Black Chicago Renaissance.

6. CONSENSUS OR PLURALISM OF MEANINGS AND READINGS

How common are agreements of literary themes? And how easy is it to transform an agreement into access points of LCSH? This was what Susan M. Hayes aimed to find out in her sample analysis. She analyzed agreement and degrees of agreement of what the sampled literary works were about, both as to the denotative level and to the connotative level of imaginative literature. She found that

“There was a greater degree of consensus in the popular criticism (composed almost entirely of book reviews) than in the scholarly criticism” (Hayes, 2001, p. 83).

Among works of popular criticism there was complete critical consensus in 9.3 % of the cases, but almost complete critical consensus (all but one agreed) in 68 % of the cases. In 10.7 % of the cases there was partial critical consensus (two or more disagreed).

“Among works with scholarly criticism there was complete critical consensus in 6.7 % of cases, almost complete critical consensus in 20.0 % of cases, and partial critical consensus in 44.4 % of cases” (p. 84).

The conclusion is already near. It is difficult to use scholarly literary critics in order to determine what a work of literature is about. They simply disagree among themselves. Hayes indicates that it is “possibly because they routinely analyzed the implicit, or figurative content of a work” (p. 85).

Hayes also examined the possibility of constructing LC subject headings as access points from the critical material. She found that it was easier to translate popular criticism into the language of the retrieval system, “because its vocabulary was often identical, or similar, to that of LCSH’s” (p. 90). And in general it was easier to construct LCSH terms as denotative access points than as connotative access points. She was able to construct identical terms in 48.0 % of the cases from the popular criticism as denotative access points, and 30.6 % of the cases as connotative access points. As for scholarly

criticism she was able to construct identical terms in 33.6 % of the cases as denotative access points, and only 9.6 % of the cases as connotative access points. She also succeeded partially in constructing synonymous or adapted terms, but the proportion of works having connotative access points that were “too profound or complex to be translated into LCSH headings” was 48.1 % (scholarly criticism) and 38.9 % (popular criticism) (p. 90).

The last findings may lead to more conclusions: It seems difficult to express the connotative or thematic level of imaginative literature in LCSH. Hayes suggests that it is “perhaps due to the fact that LCSH, having been designed to index non-fiction, has comparatively fewer terms that express thematic concepts” (p. 90). The conclusion may be that LCSH have to be improved with more subject headings on the connotative, thematic level of imaginative literature. But instead the conclusion may be that it is extremely difficult to express the connotative, thematic level in subject headings as access points. It may work in relation to specific literary themes or motifs where the suggested dictionaries may be a literary warrant, but disagreement of literary themes may also exist as a general feature of literary criticism.

It is interesting that literary scholars fundamentally disagree of the aboutness of the single imaginative work. The literary critics or scholars read and interpret the works very differentially. From Hayes you may conclude that the indexer should use *popular* literary criticism as a literary warrant, but neither popular criticism nor scholarly criticism shows a large degree of agreement when it comes to the connotative, thematic level. Indeed search for agreement or consensus may be a wrong starting point. The fundamentals of literary scholarship are interpretations of texts, and interpretations do not aim to find the final truth of texts. On the contrary the value of literary criticism exists in new, substantial readings of literary works. New points of view and new theories lead to different interpretations. Accumulation of knowledge in literary scholarship is – among other things – an accumulation of different interpretations, and if the interpretations have an internal coherence or a contextual substantiality they are all accepted of the community of literary scholarship.

The acceptance of different readings and interpretations is strengthened in literary scholarship during the last 30 years or more. Interpretations from cultural or multicultural contexts do not represent the only – and not even the strongest – paradigm of scholarship, as Miller seems to think. Other paradigms have developed from the post-structuralism of the sixties and seventies, e.g. deconstruction and reader-response criticism. Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, Jonathan M. Culler, and others represent deconstruction. The most famous text of reader-response criticism is *Is There a Text in This Class?* (1980) by

Stanley Fish. Roland Barthes has been the leading critic of the transition from structuralism to post-structuralism, and the semiotics of Charles Sanders Pierce and Umberto Eco has been important too.

Common to most of these theorists is a view of literature as polysemous. The plurality of meanings is seen as a fundamental feature of all texts, and especially the texts of imaginative literature. Common is also the view of the role of the reader. The decoding of the reader is a condition of meaning. The plurality of meanings is also due to a plurality of readers. The existence of imaginative literature may, in fact, be due to reading-conventions more than to features of the texts themselves.

So there exist a plurality of literary theories. Each of them has a focus on different aspects of the literary text. Scholars of cultural studies or theories of multiculturalism attend their studies to the context and referential meaning of literature. Their information need in the context of Knowledge Organization will be subject headings on a denotative level. Other scholars will attend their studies to the poetic function. Their needs concern literary style, genres, narrative construction etc. and point to the indexing of the how-facet. Scholars of comparative literature may have a need of subject headings concerning specific literary themes or motifs of world literature. Finally scholars in the tradition of post-structuralism may find any subject headings limiting, reducing the interplay of meanings.

7. CONCLUSION

Like all kinds of Knowledge Organization the KO of imaginative literature must consider the specific domain in question. To clarify the domain of imaginative literature the paper suggests the use of Roman Jakobson's basic functions of verbal communication. The dominance of the poetic function in imaginative literature may explain some of the general characteristics of the domain. However, using Jakobson's six functions of verbal communication we can observe both differences and similarities between fiction and non-fiction. The issue of genres must be considered in relation to that, and some theorists maintain that also non-fiction has fictitious features.

The poetic function and the how-facet seem embedded in the nature of imaginative literature, nor just an outer 'dress' of referential content. On the other hand it is possible to speak of and represent the denotative, referential level of imaginative literature, bracketing the poetic function. Considering the aspect of users among literary scholars and students, some of these will need subject headings on this level. A pluralism of several paradigms exists in literary scholarship. Approaches of sociology of literature or cultural studies

shape needs of subject headings as access points to social or cultural contents, e.g. social groups or geographical places.

But like the poetic function is essential to literature, so are the connotations of literature. A study by Susan Hayes shows high disagreement of the connotative level among literary critics. Connotations imply a higher degree of interpretation of literary themes, and on this level there is only little consensus. Indeed it is a virtue of the literary community to find and interpret new themes and new points of view. On the other hand dictionaries of literary themes and motifs have been elaborated, so there exist at least some consensus of frequently appearing themes of world literature.

The conclusion may not seem very clear, but that is exactly the point. It is relatively easy to create subject headings on a denotative level, mirroring the indexing of non-fiction, and there seems to exist a need among some literary scholars of this kind of indexing, though it falls short of the dominance of the poetic function of imaginative literature, the how-facet and the important connotative, thematic level of literature. To some extent it is possible to take these aspects into account, e.g. by applying categories of genres and a controlled group of subject headings of literary themes and motifs.

Another conclusion may be that there is no need of subject headings among literary scholars. Following Roland Barthes and other post-structuralists or deconstructionists, literary works may be read in numerous ways. Imaginative literature is defined by a plurality of meanings. They will not look for similarities but will emphasize the differences of meaning during each reading. To this point of view KO and subject headings may be obsolete or even impossible.

The changing and different paradigms among literary scholars need to be studied further in order to clarify in which ways indexing and subject headings are needed, obsolete or superfluous.

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